

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7823

INFO SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

USCINCSO

S E C R E T CARACAS 2241

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PFOR, VE

SUBJECT: MEETING OF LATIN AMERICAN ARMY CHIEFS

1. MAJOR GENERAL MANUEL BERECIARTU PARTIDAS, COMMANDING GENERAL OF VENEZUELAN ARMY, ANNOUNCED ON FEBRUARY 24 THAT THERE WOULD BE A MEETING IN LATE MARCH OR EARLY APRIL OF THE ARMY CHIEFS OF THOSE COUNTRIES REPRESENTED AT THE AYACUCHO CEREMONIES IN LIMA IN DECEMBER 1974, NAMELY, ARGENTINA, CHILE, BOLIVIA, PERU, ECUADOR, PANAMA, COLO BIA AND VENEZUELA. BERECIARTU MENTIONED THAT AT THE LIMA MEETING HE HAD INVITED THE ARMY CHIEFS TO MEET IN CARACAS IN ORDER TO REQUITE THE HOSPITALITY WHICH HAD BEEN EXTENDED TO HIM. HE SAID THAT HTIS MEETING WOULD BE WITHOUT AN AGENDA, AND THAT MOST OF THE ACTIVITIES WOULD BE OF A SOCIAL NATURE.

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2. THE PRESS REPORT OF BERECIARTU'S COMMENTS ALSO INCLUDED A WIRESERVICE ARTICLE DATED IN BOGOTA WHICH SAID THAT THIS GROUP OF ARMY CHIEFS WOULD "STUDY THE SITUATION OF THE NATIONAL ARMIES AND ADOPT STRATEGIES TO FOLLOW IN EACH COUNTRY." THE ARTICLE ADDED THAT THE MEETING WOULD PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO COORDINATE THE COUNTER-GUERRILLA PLANS WHICH ARGENTINA, BOLIVIA, COLOMBIA, ECUADOR AND VENEZUELA ARE CARRYING OUT.

3. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY UNDERSTANDS FROM RELIABLE SOURCES THAT THIS MEETING WAS ARRANGED BETWEEN PRESIDENT PEREZ AND GENERAL BERECIARTU, WITHOUT COORDINATION WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE MAJOR GENERAL LEAL TORRES. RESPONSIBLE VENEZUELAN DEFENSE MINISTRY OFFICERS WERE CAUGHT UNAWARES BY BERECIARTU'S PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT AND HAVE NOT AS YET MADE DETAILED PREPARATIONS FOR THE MEETING. THEY THOUGHT THAT THE MEETING WOULD BE ALMOST ENTIRELY SOCIAL IN NATURE AND DID NOT SEE WHAT SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS THESE ARMY CHIEFS COULD USEFULLY DISCUSS. THESE VENEZUELAN OFFICERS WERE CONCERNED, HOWEVER, OVER THE POSSIBLE ADVERSE REACTIONS BY THE ARMY CHIEFS OF BRAZIL, PARAGUAY AND URUGUAY AS A RESULT OF THEIR EXCLUSION FROM THE MEETING.

4. ONE INTERESTING ASPECT OF THIS DEVELOPMENT IS THAT IT INDICATES THE CLOSENESS BETWEEN PRESIDENT PEREZ AND GENERAL BERECIARTU, WHO APPARENTLY ORGANIZED THIS MEETING WITHOUT COORDINATION WITH THE MINISTER OF DEFENSE.
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